

18th CONGRESS, }
1st Session.

[400]

MEMORIAL

OF

Sundry Farmers

OF THE

STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA.

MARCH 3, 1824.

Read, and referred to the committee of the whole House, to which is committed the bill to amend the several acts for imposing duties on imports, &c.

WASHINGTON :

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1824.



MEMORIAL.

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled.

The Memorial of the subscribers, citizens of the City and County of Philadelphia,

RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH:

That the existing tariff requires an early and thorough revision, so as to remove the strong objections to which it is liable in its present form.

I. It is manifestly unjust and impolitic; as, contrary to the first principles of policy and justice, it imposes oppressive duties on necessities of life, some of them used wholly by the poor, and admits on low duties conveniences and luxuries, some of them used wholly, and all of them chiefly, by the wealthy. The duties on molasses is about 42 per cent.—on brown sugar 100 to 120—on bohea tea 120—on souchong 150—and on salt 180. Whereas gold and silver plate, jewels, lace and lace veils, watches, &c. pay but $7\frac{1}{2}$; clocks, silks, satins, cambric linens, bombazets, gauzes, and Canton crapes, but 15—China, elegant cutlery, girandoles, and lustres, but 20—and plated ware, fine muslins, calicoes, kerseymere, broad cloth, cashmere and merino shawls, Brussels and other carpets, but 25. To show the extreme violation of justice in this respect, it will be sufficient to state, that 100 dollars worth of salt, 180 dollars worth of brown sugar, 150 dollars worth of bohea tea, or 120 dollars worth of souchong, pay as much duty as 720 dollars worth of Brussels carpets, Cashmere or merino shawls, or broad cloth; 900 dollars worth of porcelain or girandoles; 1200 dollars worth of silks, satins, gauzes, or Canton crapes; or 2400 dollars worth of silver plate, jewels, lace, or lace veils. We feel confident that the most aristocratical or despotic government in Europe cannot furnish a more shocking instance of partiality towards the rich and oppression of the poor.

II. The tariff is liable to objection on the score of partiality on another ground. It protects certain species of the productions of the national industry by exorbitant duties, and exposes to ruin, from foreign rivalry, those citizens employed on other productions, entitled, on every ground of justice, to equal protection. We have seen that the wealthy sugar planter is protected by a duty of one hundred

per cent. The tobacco planter is protected by a duty on manufactured tobacco of 10 cents per lb. which, at the ordinary rates abroad, is also one hundred per cent. Both these articles are bulky, and subject to very heavy freight, averaging probably at least fifteen per cent.—whereas the poor stocking weaver has only a protection of 20 per cent.—the manufacturer of fine muslins and woollen goods only 25 per cent.—and the manufacturer of ironmongery, steel, copper, tin, brass, and lead, only 20 per cent. The freights on some of these latter articles are not above 2—on others 8, 9, or 10 per cent.

It is with strong feelings, which we will not express, but which may be readily conceived, that we have observed, whenever an attempt has been made to afford further protection, by an increase of the existing duties, for instance, on woollen and fine cotton manufactures from 25 to 33 per cent.—on manufactures of iron, steel, brass, copper, &c. from 20 to 25, that the tobacco and sugar planters, thus exorbitantly protected themselves, regardless of the equal rights of their fellow citizens, have united in a solid phalanx, to vote down the proposition. On this extraordinary conduct, it would be wholly superfluous to offer the comments which will readily present themselves to your honorable houses.

The tariff is liable to strong objections on other grounds.

III. For the encouragement of national industry, the wise nations of Europe have almost universally admitted raw materials at low duties, or duty free. This principle is recognized in our tariff in many cases. But in others it imposes equal and sometimes higher duties on bulky raw materials, than on the articles fabricated of them.

Flax and wool pay a duty of 15 per cent. Hemp a duty equal to 33—cotton a duty equal to about 37½. Whereas linens; all other articles made of flax; camlets, and calimancoes, pay but 15.—Hempen cloth, except Russia and German linens, Russia and Holland duck,) pay but 20 per cent.—fine cottons 25, and cotton stockings only 20. Thus, in some cases, the raw material pays 50 and 60 per cent. more duty than the manufactured article.

We would observe that the bounty on British linens at five pence per yard is 20 per cent—at six pence per yard is 25 per cent.—and on higher priced, from 10 to 24: whereas our duty, as above, is only 15. Thus the bounty on low priced linens pays not only the duty but the freight.

We have never objected, nor do we now object, to the liberal protection afforded to commerce, which has been guarded by every precaution that legislative wisdom could devise. We have never murmured nor repined at the enormous expense it entails on us, for fleets, armies, and ambassadors. But we must deeply regret, that whatever distress prevails among the manufacturers—(as, for instance, in the disastrous years 1819, 20, and 21, when ruin spread among them far and wide,) whenever any attempt has been made to afford them relief, the merchants have united their paramount influence with as much zeal to defeat the measure, and prevent the relief of their fellow-citizens, as if their own vital interests were about to be destroy-

ed—or as if the manufacturers were not equally entitled to the protection of the government with themselves.

We will enumerate some of the great advantages enjoyed by the merchants, and wish them contrasted with the additional protection for Manufacturers proposed by Mr. Baldwin's Bill.

1. Foreign vessels are absolutely prohibited, under penalty of confiscation, from carrying on the coasting trade; thus securing it to our own merchants exclusively.

2. Goods imported in foreign vessels pay an addition of ten per cent. on the duties charged on those imported in American vessels.

3. American vessels pay but six cents per ton on entry; foreign vessels, not on the most favorable footing, 50 cents. A difference of 700 per cent.

4. The duty on Souchong and other black teas in American vessels is 25 cents per pound; on imperial and gunpowder, 50; on Hyson and young Hyson, 40; and on Hyson skin, and other green teas, 28: whereas, in foreign vessels, the duties are 34, 68, 56, and 38 cents; making a difference of duty in favor of the American merchant, of no less than 37 per cent.

These and other advantages early elevated the American tonnage to the second rank in the scale of nations—and would alone be sufficient to prove the necessity and immense advantage of protecting national industry from overwhelming foreign competition. Had the *let-us-alone* policy prevailed in regard to our shipping, we could never have attained the rank which we now hold.

Against the proposed measure a constitutional objection has been raised. It is very confidently asserted, that Congress possesses no right to impose duties to protect manufactures, or for any other purpose than revenue. We respectfully conceive that this objection will not stand investigation. The high duty on manufactured tobacco, coeval with the government itself, was intended for the protection of the tobacco planter. It has no reference whatever to revenue; as the whole amount collected from tobacco, since the government was formed, would not pay the salary of a naval officer for a single year. The high duties on foreign spirits were imposed to aid the farmer, by protecting the distillation of American spirits, and thus securing him a market for his grain. The high duty on hemp was originally laid to enable the planters of South Carolina and Georgia, to cultivate that article, as at that time, [1789,] rice and indigo, their two leading staples, had sunk so low in price, as not to be worth cultivating.

Among the objections to the modification of the tariff, great emphasis is laid on its tendency to promote smuggling. The chief duties proposed by Mr. Baldwin's tariff, were those on woollens, and fine cottons, 33 per cent. instead of 25; 25 per cent. on manufactures of iron, steel, brass, copper, tin, lead, &c. instead of 20; and, for sake of revenue, 25 per cent on silks and linens. We respectfully conceive that it is sufficient to meet this objection, to state, that while we impose 120 and 150 per cent. on teas, 100 per cent. on pepper, 50 per cent. on pimento, 100 per cent. on spirits and sugar, 50, 60 75, and

80 per cent. on wines, it is utterly inconsistent to allege the danger of smuggling, as a necessary result of imposing duties of 25 and 33 per cent.

We wish to meet one other objection to the protection of manufactures—the danger of extortion—after the example of the period of the war, in which prices were raised, as it is said, exorbitantly. It might be sufficient to repel this objection, to state, that the great rise of raw materials, wool for instance, from 75 cents to three and four dollars per lb. would have warranted a greater rise than actually took place. But we beg leave to observe that, in the year 1816, at the period of the enactment of the present tariff, when the clamor against extortion was first excited, and zealously urged, flour rose from 8 to 10 dollars; upland cotton from 13 to 20 cents—and tobacco from 96 to 185 dollars; and that on the declaration of war, most imported articles were raised at once 20, 30, 40, and 50 per cent. We trust that these plain facts, on which we forbear to dilate, will set this objection at rest for ever, with all men who regard their character.

Hitherto we have considered the subject merely as regards the prosperity of our manufactures—and the equal claims of our manufacturers. We now wish to consider it on higher ground—in a grand national point of view.

We have been at peace for very nearly nine years. No great national calamity has visited us during that period. We have been blest with superabundance of all the fruits of the earth. Of one of the most valuable raw materials in the world, we produce at least three-fifths of the entire consumption of Europe and America. Our natural, moral, and political advantages, never were exceeded perhaps never equalled, in the annals of the human race. Under a good system we could not possibly have failed to enjoy great prosperity—every order, condition, profession, and trade would thrive. Full employment would be had for every man, woman, and child, disposed to industry. The country would exhibit the appearance of a terrestrial paradise—and would really hold out “an asylum to the oppressed of all nations.” But to the members of your honorable houses, coming from the east and the west, the north and the south, we appeal for the truth of the following facts:—that, with the exception of certain situations and occupations, enjoying particular advantages, depression pervades the land—that so much of the industry required to supply our wants, is performed in foreign countries, that almost every rank and condition in life, every trade, profession, and occupation, is crowded—that most of our great staples, although reduced in quantity since the year 1801, (notwithstanding an increase in our population of 87 per cent.) are so far beyond the demand of the foreign markets, as to reduce the price below what affords a reasonable remuneration to the cultivator; in one word, that with all the blessings that could be desired to secure national happiness, the situation of the country is very far, indeed, from prosperous.

That a change of our system is requisite, must therefore be obvious to the most superficial observer. That nothing further can be

done for commerce, is equally clear. For agriculture, which, with few exceptions, has the exclusive supply of the nation, little is within the power of Congress. But the department of manufactures affords ample scope for healing the wounds of the nation.

No country ever fully availed itself of its advantages, which devoted an over proportion of its industry to agriculture. Let us examine the case of Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and Poland, rich in the utmost profusion of the gifts of nature—and with vast surpluses of all the necessities of life, yet exhibiting, amidst boundless abundance, the most afflicting scenes of wretchedness and misery, in all its grades and forms. The bounties of Heaven are lavished on them in vain. Their demands for the productions of the manufacturing nations are imperious and increasing—but the demands for their productions are fluctuating, and subject to the variations of seasons in the nations on which they depend. Of this the United States have had dear-bought experience during every period of their existence. It is probable that this fluctuation has caused losses to our citizens, within the last thirty years, to the amount of from one hundred to one hundred and fifty millions of dollars. On this all important subject we present the luminous view of Alexander Hamilton—

“ There are natural causes tending to render the external demand for the surplus of agricultural nations a precarious reliance. The differences of seasons in the countries which are the consumers, make immense differences in the produce of their own soils, in different years, and consequently in the degrees of their necessity for foreign supply. Plentiful harvests with them, especially if similar ones occur at the same time in the countries which are the furnishers, occasion, of course, a glut in the markets of the latter.”

The proportion of the population of Great Britain employed in agriculture is about 33 per cent.—in Ireland, about 75—in the United States, about 84. If the proportion were reduced to 70 or 75, and the consumers of the produce of the soil proportionably increased, we should export less of our produce, and, reasoning by analogy, and from experience, receive 20, 30, 40, or 50 per cent. more for the reduced quantity than now for the whole. Our statistics furnish innumerable examples in proof of this theory. We shall quote only two. The export of flour in 1819, was only 750,660 barrels, of which the average price was \$8, and the amount \$6,005,280. The export of 1820, was 1,177,036 barrels, which so far glutted the foreign markets, as to reduce the price to \$4 50, and the whole amount to \$5,296,664. The export of cotton in 1819, was 87,997,045 lbs. which produced \$21,081,771. The export of 1820, was 127,860,152 lbs. and the great increase so far reduced the price, that the proceeds were only \$22,308,667. The general tenor of our export trade goes to establish this theory beyond all controversy.

Our system has had a fair trial for thirty-four years of peace, with the exception of a short war of two years and a half. After enjoying all the immense advantages of a neutral commerce for above seventeen years, it found us, at the commencement of a perilous warfare, totally unprepared for the emergency, in regard to finances,

and the means of providing a large proportion of the articles most essential to human comfort and convenience; among which must be enumerated the great articles of clothing. The woollen manufacture had been so wholly neglected, and we were so dependant on European supplies, that we were unable to furnish a few thousand dollars worth of blankets for the Indians. Our cotton manufacture was at so low an ebb, that our whole consumption of the raw material, in 1810, was only 3,000,000 lbs. though in that year we exported 93,000,000 lbs. Whereas, by a proper protection, both of those branches might have been raised to full maturity so as to have supplied our utmost wants. Our system inflicted on the nation, throughout the whole war, the most dangerous feebleness in regard to our fiscal resources. To meet the demands of the country for clothing and other necessary articles, for which we had depended on Europe, manufactories were hastily established, with slender capitals, great inexperience, deficiency of machinery, and under almost every other disadvantage which could militate against great undertakings. The energy and intelligence of our citizens overcame them all. In a few months they attained a perfection, without governmental aid, which other nations required many years and great aid from government, to attain. Millions of money were invested in those grand establishments—but peace unfortunately blasted and blighted the flattering prospects; ruined probably two-thirds of the manufacturers; and sacrificed the same proportion of the capital thus invested. A timely aid at that period, such as the nations of Europe afford their manufacturers, would have averted the desolation that ensued.

With one other view of our affairs, so far as regards the interests and safety of the nation, we shall conclude this memorial. Great Britain and France, exhausted by a protracted and destructive warfare, of above twenty years, in which the former expended \$7,000,000,000—and the latter \$4,400,000,000, are now, by protecting the industry of their subjects in all its forms, reviving from the consequences of this state of things. They are rapidly paying off their national debts—reducing the amount of their taxes—wonderfully extending their manufactures and commerce—and increasing in wealth and resources. Great Britain has within the last year established an effective sinking fund of 22,500,000 dollars. Our situation exhibits a melancholy contrast. Our debt is diminishing slowly—our sinking fund is annihilated—our manufactures, coarse cottons excepted, make slender progress—our commerce is generally depressed—property is reducing in value—and circulation is excessively sluggish. In a word, so far as regards this portion of the Union, to use the language of the directors of the Philadelphia Bank, "*the mercantile embarrassments of the country for some years past, have been so severely felt by persons of all ranks in society, and the miseries of poverty have invaded the fire-sides of so many of our respectable fellow-citizens,*" that to change a system, which has produced so many evils, is imperiously necessary. We, therefore, respectfully pray that the tariff may be so modified, as to afford that protection to manufactures which our government affords to commerce.